

Social Studies Concepts

The Social Studies MEAP is aligned to the content standards and benchmarks for social studies contained in the Michigan Curriculum Framework. When you are teaching toward the benchmarks and using the vocabulary of the benchmarks, you are preparing your students for success on the social studies MEAP.

Where did the concept list come from?

The list came from the content standards and benchmarks for social studies contained in the Michigan Curriculum Framework. We have taken the concepts and vocabulary contained in the benchmarks and have listed them by grade level for each of the four disciplines of history, geography civics and economics.

How is the list divided?

The list is divided by grade levels and by social studies discipline. A quick reminder, early elementary is grades K-2, later elementary grades 3-5, middle school 6-8 and high school covers grades 9-12. The four disciplines are history, geography, economics and civics.

When should they be used?

Use the list when you are creating units and lesson plans for your students and when you are working with colleagues on curriculum development committees.

How can the list be used by teachers?

You will have the most instructional success if you cluster a small group of related concepts from the grade level you are teaching and stress those concepts using a chapter from the textbook or a unit you created. When you are confident that the students know and can use the concepts you have taught, use the benchmarks listed in the content standards and benchmarks for social studies to test your students' achievement.

Can you give us an example of clustering concepts?

Here is an example that might help you. An examination of the concepts for early elementary economics reveals many combinations of concepts you can sensibly cluster. Consumers, goods, services, currency and coin could easily be clustered together. "Consumers purchase goods and services using currency and coins," could be a basic big idea you may want to teach in an early elementary unit.

Is there only one way to cluster concepts?

No, another cluster could put together producers, consumers, goods, and services to explore the big idea that "producers provide goods and services for consumers." If you are using a textbook, examine the instructional material to determine how the concepts are clustered in the text. And remember, some concepts are so rich and complex that you may choose to teach them alone.

Michigan Department of Education: This resource is provided to assist with the improvement of student achievement based on Michigan social studies standards--- a necessary component of responsible citizenship.

What would an example of teaching a cluster look like?

Create a unit or use materials that teaches a cluster of concepts. Make sure you have a focus like a big idea, for example, “consumers purchase goods and services using currency and coins.” Then teach the unfamiliar concepts in the context of the big idea. To define consumers for example, you might choose to use pictures showing individuals acting as a consumer. You will want to discuss how families are consumers, perhaps having students draw pictures showing their own families in the role of consumer. Reflecting on their own day and week students can discover when they acted as consumers. Purchasing lunch at school or buying a gift for a family member are two common examples. Listing how the “school” is a consumer is another exploration that will help students make sense of the concept of consumer.

While teaching the concept of consumer you will also discuss currency and coin. What is the difference? How will the students pay for items they will consume today---with currency, coin, or a combination? Obviously, to teach this big idea you will also have to teach the concepts of goods and services. These lessons will take many days and extend over time.

Once you have taught your lessons and given students opportunities to use the concepts in multiple contexts you will be ready to assess student learning using the benchmarks. Select a benchmark that incorporates the concepts you have taught and turn the benchmark into an assessment task. *Identify ways families produce and consume goods and services* is a benchmark. You might ask students to fold a sheet of paper into four squares and draw a picture in each box that shows the four concepts of the benchmark.

Do I have to teach every concept listed for my grade cluster?

You should work with the other teachers at your grade cluster, all the teachers teaching social studies in grades 6, 7, and 8 for example, and decide who will be responsible for teaching each benchmark. Who will introduce and when appropriate who will reinforce each benchmark?

There are many “right” ways of doing this. You should decide which concepts fit into units you have already taught and have had success with, and the content of your textbooks and supplemental programs before making any final decisions. Remember all benchmarks should be accomplished by the last grade in the grade cluster. By eighth grade for example the students should have mastered all the middle school (grades 6-8) benchmarks. This activity will divide the responsibility of teaching the concepts between all the teachers. The concepts are not the responsibility of any one teacher.